

THE “DO’S AND DON’TS” OF CEMETERY CLEANING

GETTING THERE:

DO seek permission from abutting property owner to pass through their land. Ask where to park the car to be out of their way. Your consideration on their behalf may net you some cooperation (and maybe even some help) from them. Respect their land and their wishes. Leave no refuse on their property. If you pass through closed gates, re-close them. Always leave everything on abutting property as you find it.

STONES:

DO NOT move gravestones. If they appear to be out of place, draw a map showing the location of the stone. Indicate by arrow where the stones should be (if known). List names and dates. Slate and small marble stones that are broken off and out of place are in jeopardy of theft. Please list ALL information that appears on the stone. Call Commissioner if stone is perceived to be endangered. Photograph if possible.

LIVING TREES:

DO NOT cut large living trees in burial grounds, even when they are engulfing a stone. In such a case, the best method is to photograph and record all visible information on the stone. Felling large trees endangers other stones and opens the area to sunlight, which encourages rapid second growth, such as briars, sumac and poison ivy. The large trees provide shade and thereby inhibit undesirable growth from overrunning the cemetery.

FALLEN TREES:

DO NOT drag large trees across gravestones. Get help to carefully lift away from the stones. Large branches should be cut into sections and carried away. While chain saws are not recommended as standard equipment in an old burial ground, it may be the only tool effective in removing very large fallen trees. Remember, stones may be underneath and nails and wire in old trees will quickly dull a chain. Every precaution must be taken to protect the gravestone.

BRUSH AND SAPLINGS:

DO not cut brush in the spring because the sap is rising and the roots will produce multiple shoots from ground level. DO cut unwanted saplings selectively between October 15th and January 15th. Cutting during this normally dormant period will permanently get rid of the saplings. A gasoline powered brush cutter may simplify the job, but if it is used near the gravestones, it is best to protect the stone with a piece of sheet metal.

FALLEN BRANCHES, LEAVES AND RUBBISH:

DO place all leaves and small branches in yard debris bags, as these are recyclable. Bring the bags to the curbside or edge of the cemetery and notify the City of Warwick Sanitation and Recycling Department (738-2000 x6513) for collection. Brush is also recyclable and must be bundled and tied in 4 ft lengths.

RAKING:

DO Rake with a bamboo or wire rake. Rake lightly as soil in old burial grounds may contain rare and endangered wild flowers. Heavy raking may scratch up and kill sensitive growth that may be desirable. Rake gently around the grave markers.

WALLS, FENCES AND GATES:

Treat these with care and respect. Replace stonewall stones where they have rolled away and mend or restore fences and gates where necessary.

TOMBS:

Make note if there is damage to the gate or door. If open. Remove all rubbish.

GRAVESTONE RUBBING:

Gravestone rubbing is not recommended except under expert supervision.

PHOTOGRAPHY

DO take "before and after" photos. DO record date, cemetery location, and direction photo was taken.

SUGGESTED TOOLS:

yard debris bags	hatchet	gloves
plastic garbage bags	brush cutter	first aid kit
rakes	weed whacker	water bottle
string or rope for bundling	pruning saw	camera
log carrier	pruning shears	notebook and pencil
hand held grass clippers		
chain saw to cut large fallen trees ONLY		
sheet metal to protect stones when using power tools		

A woven laundry basket with two handles makes an excellent carrying device over rough terrain. Carried between two people, it can contain most of the required tools.

SAFETY:

DO wear gloves; preferably leather ones, when handling vines and roots. Be aware that ALL parts of poison ivy, oak and sumac are poisonous even in their dormant period. Watch for uneven ground and stumps within the graveyard. Wear safety glasses when using power equipment. Exercise every precaution so there'll be no need to open that first aid kit!

REVISIT:

Do go back in the Fall to cut those unwanted saplings. A follow up visit the next year to check on the stragglers will insure that the cleanup was a success.